



State of North Carolina  
Office of the Governor

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**GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES *LEARN AND EARN* EDUCATION INITIATIVE  
NAMED HARVARD INNOVATIONS IN GOVERNMENT AWARD FINALIST**

**RALEIGH** – Governor Mike Easley today announced that North Carolina’s *Learn and Earn* high school reform initiative has been named one of 15 finalists in the 2008 Innovations in American Government Awards competition sponsored by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. The program was selected from a pool of nearly 1,000 applicants to represent the best in government innovation on the local, city, county, tribal, state and federal levels. From the 15 finalists, six programs will be selected to receive \$100,000 toward the replication and dissemination of the innovation. The winners will be announced in September.

“Our *Learn and Earn* initiative is already helping more North Carolina students complete high school, get a head start on a college education and be more prepared to compete and win in a very competitive economy,” Easley said. “Many states have already expressed interest in starting a *Learn and Earn* program and this recognition from Harvard University, and the possibility of being an award winner, will help us share what we have learned and the success we have had so we can work together to help students across the nation complete their education and be prepared for college and a career in the global marketplace.”

Finalists this year include nine state programs, two city programs and two federal programs. For seven months, policy analysts, government officials and academic experts from Harvard, as well as other institutions, evaluated each program. On June 12, a team from North Carolina will travel to Cambridge, Mass. to make a presentation about the *Learn and Earn* initiative to the National Selection Committee. Presentations will be available on the Internet via live stream at: <http://video.ksg.harvard.edu:8080/ramgen/encoder/live>.

Presentation Team members include: Ann McArthur, Governor Easley’s education advisor; Scott Ralls, president of the N.C. Community College System; Rebecca Garland, executive director of the N.C. State Board of Education; Albert Eckel, government affairs director of Corning, Inc. and a member of the N.C. Business Committee for Education and James Blackwell, a graduate of Josephine Dobbs Clement Early College High School in Durham. In May, Blackwell was among 60 students in the first class to attend a *Learn and Earn* school for four years and earn high school diplomas and associate’s degrees. He is now one of the 25,000 students eligible to receive an EARN Grant, which will help him attend college at N.C. Central University and graduate debt-free.